

The Last Great Lover

by

Josephine Allen

Don Giovanni woke to toothache. His cheek rested in a pool of cold, slimy drool on the pillow.

He cursed at the prospect of a visit to the barber-surgeon, and the expense of getting yet another ivory replacement tooth carved. Reaching across the tumbled bedclothes for comfort, he found the serving-wench had long departed.

Worse, he now remembered her knowing smirk that said, as plainly as words, *You're past it, old man.*

"Master..."

His servant and partner in perfidy stood at his elbow, holding the steaming morning chocolate.

"I grow old, Leporello," the Don growled. "Once 'twould be a countess in my bed, and she'd not be gone by morning. You would have had to throw the baggage out."

Leporello nodded.

Another irritation. Not so very long ago, Leporello would have protested that his master was yet a stag, a stallion, and jollied him out of his gloom. This ready agreement was most disagreeable. Heaving himself out of bed, he covered his nakedness with a silk robe — old and shabby now, like himself — the gift of some forgotten Hungarian countess.

"Aaggh! Damnation!" he roared as sciatica stabbed his leg, causing him to collapse back on the edge of the bed. "I'd sell my soul to be young and potent again!"

Sulphurous smoke belched in the room. The Prince of Darkness appeared in all his ebon majesty. The chocolate sprayed across the room as Leporello fled, howling in terror.

The Devil shot a black lace cuff, flinging back his midnight cape to reveal the blood-red inner lining. His thin lips parted between the pointed moustache and goatee.

"Your servant, Don Giovanni," he said silkily.

The Don found his voice. "That was a most speedy apparition," he said, proud of his own *sang-froid*.

"I'm never far from such as you, Don Giovanni," Satan murmured, somewhat ominously. "What is it you require? The standard contract?"

"Are there others?"

"No, but I like to give the illusion of choice. The usual three wishes, in exchange for your immortal soul?"

"I suppose so."

Satan whipped out a parchment and unrolled it under Giovanni's nose. The Don read:

WHEREAS Satan, the party of the first part (aka Ahriman; Beelzebub; the Cloven-hoofed One; the Devil; the Horned One; Iblis; Lucifer, Son of the Morning; Mara; Mephistopheles; the Prince of Darkness and so forth and etcetera) contracts with ..., the party of the second part, to Grant to the party of the second part three (3) wishes, in exchange whereof, on the demise of the party of the second part, he will assign free of all encumbrances and contrary claims to the party of the first part his immortal soul, to tease, torment, torture and do with as the party of the first part wishes until the end of time...

"I always thought lawyers were devils," he muttered irritably.

"Just fill in your name in the first paragraph and sign at the end," Satan said. "In blood, of course." He plucked a small sharp instrument from his pocket.

"What in the name of heav— hell is that?" Don Giovanni drew back at the sight.

"A syringe-pen. We're modernising. No more messy knives."

The Don watched in queasy fascination as Satan plunged the needle into his arm, filled the vial with blood then replaced the point with a gold Mont Blanc nib. He took the pen, wrote in his name and scrawled his signature confidently.

Satan inspected the parchment then blew on it gently with a faint blue flame. The blood dried instantly. He thrust the contract into a pocket and turned to go.

"My wishes—"

"Oh! Of course, my dear fellow. Speak."

"Firstly, I wish to have the body I had at eighteen, but my mind as it is now."

"Certainly."

Don Giovanni staggered as a great, silent wind seemed to strike him. When he recovered his balance he realised the toothache had gone, along with sundry other aches and pains he'd learned to live with. His muscles were strong, resilient, and he felt a burst of vigour in his loins.

Laughing, he turned to the mirror. The wrinkles had disappeared, but...

"Ah. I'd forgotten about the pimples."

"Never mind. Just wear more powder. Your next wish?"

"Wealth to support me in luxury to the end of my days."

Satan yawned. "How unimaginative. They all ask for that." He gestured to the flaccid purse on the bedside table. It swelled suddenly, and toppled to the floor with a musical chinking of gold.

"It will replenish itself as needed. Now, your last wish?"

"You are obliged to grant *anything* I ask?"

"Certainly, my dear fellow. It's in the contract."

"Then ... I ask that I live forever!"

Satan smiled evilly.

Don Giovanni felt a sudden imbalance in his loins. He whipped open his robe, looked down, and cried out in horror.

His testicles had swollen to the size of tennis balls, but his rod, his sceptre, his sword of lust and domination, had shrunk to a tiny button!

“What the—?”

“To live forever, you have to renew your cells *somehow*,” Satan said reasonably.

“Cells? Renew?” Don Giovanni whimpered.

“Where are we? Oh yes, the eighteenth century. To put it in words you’ll understand, you can’t go wasting your vital juices as you did in the past. You must use them to fuel your eternal life. As they’ll say in the twenty-first century, go fuck yourself.”

The Devil turned to depart.

“You cheated me, but I’ll cheat you too!” Don Giovanni screamed. “If I live forever, you’ll *never* get me in hell!”

Satan paused. “Everyone creates their own hell, Don Giovanni. Just think of all the *billions* of beautiful women you’ll see throughout the future, and all you’ll be able to do is look. When the universe dissolves to the point where time ends, you’ll be the last great lover — if you’ll still be able to remember what that means.

“Welcome to hell, Don Giovanni. Welcome to hell!”

He vanished in a great shout of Luciferian laughter, as Don Giovanni collapsed to the floor in despair.